

NAMI on Campus

IDEAS BOOKLET

Sometimes it can be hard to come up with fresh ideas on what activities your NAMI on Campus club can do to make a difference in the lives of students and in your campus community. To help you out, we have assembled this Ideas Booklet. This booklet includes lots of activities that NAMI on Campus leaders have successfully implemented on their campus communities across the country. Usually, their schools have provided funding to make these activities happen.

Your NAMI on Campus club may choose to focus on raising mental health awareness, educating the campus community about mental health, providing support to students, promoting mental health services and supports and/or advocating on issues that impact students living with mental health conditions. You may also want to focus your club's efforts on specific populations that experience higher rates of mental health issues, including students who have a parent living with a mental health condition, student veterans, culturally and racially diverse populations and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) students.

It's up to you to decide what your campus community needs most and what activities best address these needs. The key is to not to try to do everything at once, but to be strategic and focused on how best to use your time, resources and club members to make the biggest impact at your school.

Tip: Don't make mental illness the only point of an activity. Students won't (for the most part) gather together to talk about mental illness but they will come together for a campaign, social cause, creative contest, concert or a social event.

We hope this booklet helps you get started and get excited for what your NAMI on Campus is capable of doing and achieving!

Raising Mental Health Awareness

NAMI on Campus clubs often focus on raising general mental health awareness among the campus community by emphasizing how mental health is just as important as overall physical health and needs attention from the campus community. Here are a few ideas:

- Encourage students to wear silver ribbons or wristbands to promote mental health awareness.
- Work with your NAMI State Organization or NAMI Affiliate to bring [NAMIWalks](#) or [NAMIBikes](#) to your campus community.



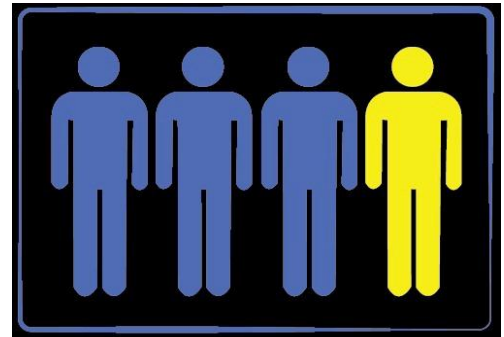
- Host a talent show, art show, or concert that focuses on mental health as a theme. Have students contribute poetry, dance, music, artwork and other creative pieces. Collaborate with creative groups on your campus. Post student stories artwork around campus.
- Bring an existing play, performance or monologue to campus that focuses on mental health.
- Participate in [Mental Illness Awareness Week](#), which is held the first full week of October. NAMI provides a broad range of materials that you can use during this week. Learn about [other awareness months and weeks](#) that you can plan events around.
- Provide resources on how students can maintain their mental health and wellness, including eating healthy, staying active, socializing and developing healthy coping skills.
- Share how common mental health issues are by highlighting the fact that one in four young adults will experience a mental health issue. [Learn and share other facts](#) about mental health. Post facts all around campus.
- Plan a flash mob on your campus community to get attention focused on mental health issues.
- Run a design contest to create promotional shirts, social media badges or other products.
- Host a candlelight vigil to honor lives lost to suicide.
- Buy [plush brains and brain stickers and pins](#). Use these items to promote mental health awareness on campus.
- Initiate social media activities that encourage student participation. Some ideas are to have students:
 - Work with the campus newspaper to run a blog or column series about mental health.
 - Celebrate their good days by initiating a Celebrate Everyday social media campaign. Students can post to their Facebook, Twitter pages and elsewhere positive messages about mental health and use the hash tag, #NAMI4Today.
 - Participate in a slang campaign in which they pledge to stop misusing words that trivialize mental health issues.
 - Post online the phrase, “seeking sensible support shows strength,” to create an initiative encouraging students to get help when they need it.
 - Share their personal experiences with mental health conditions by submitting online videos that tell their stories or shares tips and tricks. They can share their stories verbally or by holding up 3X5 cards that tell their stories.
 - Host an online photo, writing or art contest that focuses on a mental health theme.
 - Consider joining NAMI’s [You Are Not Alone](#) social media campaign to share your story or create your own campaign on a different theme.



Educating the Campus Community

There are many activities to implement that aim to educate the campus community about mental health issues by demystifying mental health conditions, talking about the issues and sharing the personal, lived experience of individuals living with mental health conditions. Here are a few ideas:

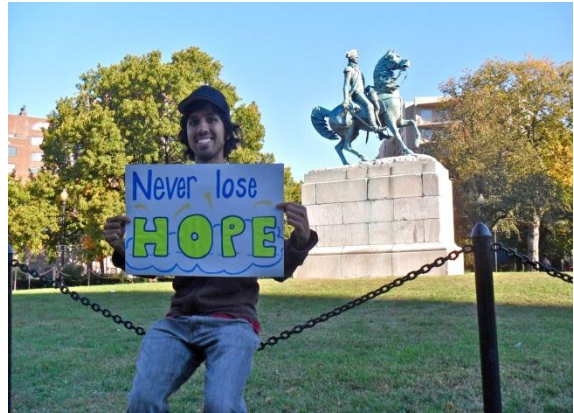
- Screen movies on campus that address mental health topics like *A Beautiful Mind*, *It's Kind of a Funny Story*, *Canvas* and [others](#). Have a panel of speakers available after the movie to discuss the mental health issues raised in the movie and educate viewers about mental health conditions.
- Work with your NAMI State Organization or NAMI Affiliate to bring [In Our Own Voice](#) (IOOV) to your campus. IOOV is a unique public education program developed by NAMI where two trained speakers share compelling, personal stories about living with mental health conditions. Read this story about how NAMI University of Arizona did this.
- Make videos or collect stories about successful students living with mental health conditions and post to your school's website or social media pages. Highlight hopeful, positive stories that break down stereotypes.
- Share the [facts](#) about the prevalence of mental health issues in college campuses. Print and share these facts by posting them around campus, attaching them to promotional items or snacks you hand out to students or share a fact a day by including them in emails, campus newspapers or other forms of communications.
- Work with your school newspaper to get articles about student mental health published.
- Print and disseminate the many free resources available on the [NAMI on Campus website](#) for students, faculty, staff and administrators posted.
- Work with your NAMI State Organization and NAMI Affiliate to offer [Mental Health First Aid](#) or another training program to your campus community so faculty and staff can recognize the early warning signs of mental health issues and know how to connect students in need of help.
- Bring well-known speakers and celebrities living with mental health conditions to speak at your campus.
- Use creative games like mental health jeopardy to educate the campus community about mental health in a fun way. Hand out prizes to winners like [plush brains and brain stickers and pins](#).



Supporting Students

NAMI on Campus clubs are in a great position to help create a positive, supportive campus community for all students, including those with mental health conditions. Here are some ideas:

- Write positive chalk messages on your campus sidewalks that provide hope for students and direct them to services and supports.
- On Valentine's Day, initiate a "Love Yourself" campaign. Have students post positive messages about themselves, commit to healthier habits and provide resources on raising self-esteem and confidence.
- Stick post-its or flyers around campus that share positive messages. You can also designate a time and place where students can hold up posters with positive messages for their peers to see while walking or driving around campus.
- During midterms and finals, host de-stressing and relaxation activities around campus. Provide healthy foods, massages from trained professionals, soothing music, tips to cope with stress and items like stress balls.
- Work with your NAMI State Organization and/or NAMI Affiliate to offer a support group for students living with mental health conditions. [Read](#) how NAMI's Peer-to-Peer program was adapted for young adults.
- Organize social events that students can participate in to interact with their peers and have positive social experiences. Social events can include attending comedy shows, going bowling, watching movies, eating out or playing board games.
- Let students living with mental health conditions know they are not alone by sharing personal stories, highlighting celebrities living with mental health conditions and posting videos on your college's website that showcase students living with mental health conditions.
- Learn how to encourage students to seek help when needed and how to provide peer support.
- Provide specific resources and supportive information for [student veterans](#), [GLBT students](#) and other student populations who experience high rates of mental health issues.
- Create mental health safe zone signs to designate places on campus where students can talk to someone who understands.
- Volunteer at local mental health centers or other community organizations that assist young adults living with mental health conditions.
- Welcome back students who are returning to school after taking a leave of absence because of a mental health issue.



Promoting Mental Health Services and Supports

Oftentimes, students in need of help do not know how or where to access mental health services and supports. NAMI on Campus clubs can play an important role in ensuring all students know what to do if they or their friends are experiencing mental health issues. Here are some ideas:

- Post flyers and information around campus and in student classrooms about available crisis hotlines, where to get help and NAMI on Campus.
- Host a mental health fair on your campus that brings together representatives from various services and supports that exist on and off campus. Include other student clubs that focus on mental health or populations of students who experience high rates of mental health issues, including student veterans, GLBT students and culturally and racially diverse students.
- Encourage school leaders to share information about available mental health services and supports during student orientation, campus tours, dormitory meetings and other campus-wide events.
- Have a resource table available for students who are in need of mental health information.
- Ensure your college's website includes information about available mental health services and supports and how to access them.
- Post ads in the school newspaper or student radio/TV station that include information on where and how to get help.

Advocating

Through advocacy, NAMI on Campus clubs can be extremely valuable in improving the lived experience of students and the mental health services and supports available on campus. NAMI's national survey report, [Students Speak: College Survey Report](#), provides lots of information on what is needed on college campuses. NAMI on Campus clubs can use it as an advocacy tool.

NAMI on Campus clubs should work with their NAMI State Organization and/or NAMI Affiliate to learn more about how to effectively advocate and how they can make an impact in their communities. Here are some ideas:

- Read these [ten simple ways to advocate](#) and [how to tell your story](#) to create change.
- Join campus committees or boards where the student voice and mental health representation is needed.
- Work with your campus newspaper and media to highlight mental health issues that need attention.
- Schedule meetings with, write letters to and/or make calls to your legislators to discuss important mental health issues.



- Encourage all students, faculty and staff to join the mental health movement and help you advocate to save the brain.
- Identify where advocacy efforts are needed on your campus. Poll students or work with your school to identify issues where your advocacy may be needed. Here are some issues to explore:
 - Does your college's disability resource center address the needs of students living with mental health conditions?
 - Does your college have a supportive medical leave policy?
 - Are students penalized academically or financially if they need to reduce their course loads, take a leave of absence or miss classes or assignments for mental health reasons?
 - Are there mental health crisis services and supports available on campus?
 - Does your college offer comprehensive referrals to off-campus services and supports if none are available on campus?
 - Does your school's mental health center have adequate capacity, resources and staff to address the needs of students?
 - Are students, faculty and staff trained on mental health issues?
 - Are accommodations for mental health conditions honored by professors?
 - Does your school's website include mental health information?
 - Do students know how and where to get help? Is the process easy for students or are there barriers to accessing services and supports?

Do you have an idea or activity you have implemented on your campus community that is not listed here? Share it with us! Email namioncampus@nami.org